



WIDE AWAKE PAGE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Edited by MARY MARSHALL



A Little Minute Man

A Story of the Revolution.
By H. C. PAINE.

All during the winter Brinton had been saying what he would do if the redcoats came, and grieving because his age, which was eight, prevented him from going with his father to fight under General Washington.

When the redcoats unexpectedly appeared in the distance, one afternoon in May, what Brinton really did was to run helter-skelter down the road, up the broad path to the house, through the front hall into the library, close the door, and then peep out of the window to watch them go by.

When he first caught sight of the soldiers Brinton was sure that there were at least a regiment of them, but when they were opposite the front gate all that he could see were a corporal and three privates. Instead of keeping on their way, however, they turned up the path toward the house, and then it seemed to Brinton that they were the most gigantic human beings he had ever seen.

His mother was away for the day, and had taken Towser with her. This, together with the fact that the enemy were now between him and his fort, entirely spoiled Brinton's plan of campaign, and he decided to seek at once some more secluded spot, and there to devise something to meet the changed conditions. But when he started to run out of the room, he found that in his hurry he had left the front door open, so that any one in the hall would be in plain sight of the soldiers, who were now very near.

Unfortunately there was no other door by which Brinton could leave the room. What was worse, there was no closet in which he could hide. The soldiers were now so close at hand that he could hear their voices, and a glance through the window showed him that two of them were going around to the back of the house, as if to cut off any possible escape in that direction.

And his mother would not be back until 8 o'clock. Instinctively his eyes sought the face of the tall timepiece in the corner. It was just 1; and he could hear the soldiers' steps on the front porch!

The clock!

Surely there was room within its generous case for a very small boy.

In less time than it takes to write it Brinton was inside, and had turned the button with which the door was fastened. As he pressed himself close against the door, so that there should be room for the pendulum to swing behind him, he heard the corporal enter the room. He knew it must be the corporal, because he ordered the other man to go upstairs and look around there, while he searched the room on the other side of the hall.

Brinton could hear the footsteps of the men as they walked about the house, and their voices as they talked to each other. Then all was quiet for a long while. He was just on the point of peeping out, when all four entered the room.

"Well," said a voice that he recognized as the corporal's, "it is plain there is no one at home. Me own impression is that the bird's flown. 'E's probably started back for camp, and the wife and the kid with 'im. I don't believe in paying no hantentions to w'at them Tories says, nobow, gink back on their own neighbors—and kin, too, like as not. It's just to curry favor with the officers, it's me own opinion. 'Ow did 'e know the Major was comink 'ome today, anyhow?"



Nobody answered him. Perhaps he didn't expect any one to.

The Major! Brinton's own father! He was coming home! This, then, was the surprise that his mother had said she would bring him when she went off with Towser in the morning to go to Colonel Shepard's. And now those redcoats were going to sit there and wait until he came, and then—Brinton did not know what would happen, whether he could be shot, or merely put in prison for the rest of his life.

Oh, if he could only get out and run to meet his father and warn him! But the men seemed to give no signs of leaving the room.

"Perhaps he haven't come at all yet," suggested one of the privates. "Perhaps 'e hasn't," answered the voice of the corporal; "but w'y, then, wouldn't his folks be 'ere a-waitink for 'im? 'Owewer, I'll give 'im hevvy chance. It's now five-and-twenty minutes after three. I'll give 'im hunkin' six, but if 'e doesn't turn up by then, we'll start away for the shore without 'im."

"Six o'clock!" thought the boy in the clock. The very time his mother had told him she was going to be home again "with something very nice for him." And now she and his father would walk right into the arms of the English soldiers, and he could not stop them!

What a noise! It startled Brinton so much that he nearly knocked the clock over; and then he realized that it was only the clock striking half past three. Half past three! He had been in there only an hour, and already he was so tired he could hardly stand up. How could he ever endure it until four, until half past four, five, six?

"If only something, some accident even, will happen to detain them!" he thought. But how much more likely it occurred to him, that his father, having but a short leave of absence, would hasten, and arrive before six.

"Tick-tock," went the clock.

"How slow, how very slow!" thought Brinton, and he wished there were

only some way of hurrying up the time so that the soldiers would go away.

Still the soldiers stayed in the room, all but one, who had gone into the kitchen to watch from there.

"Tick-tock," went the clock, and "whang-whang-whang-whang!" Only four o'clock. Brinton began to fear that he could not hold out much longer.

"Tick-tock," went the clock. Each swing of the pendulum marked one second, Brinton's mother had told him. If he could only make it swing quicker, so that the seconds would fly a little faster!

"Why not try to?" Brinton was desperate. He felt that he must do something. He took hold of the pendulum and gave it a little push. It yielded readily to his pressure. None of the soldiers seemed to notice it. He gave it another push. The result was the same. Brinton began to pick up courage, and he pushed the pendulum to and fro, to and fro, to and fro.

He tried to keep it swinging at a perfectly even rate, and apparently he succeeded. At any rate, the soldiers appeared to notice nothing different. Yet Brinton was sure that he was causing the old clock to tick off its seconds at a considerably livelier rate than usual. Half past four came all before he knew it, but by five o'clock Brinton began to realize that he was very, very tired. He had already stood absolutely still in that cramped, dark, close case, and he had pushed the pendulum first with one hand and then with the other in that narrow space until both felt sore and lame. Yet now that he had once begun, he did not dare leave off, and still it did not seem possible that he could keep it up.

The soldiers had kept very quiet for a long time. Brinton thought that two of them must be napping. At five o'clock the soldier who was awake awoke the corporal and the other private, whom the corporal sent to relieve the man on guard in the kitchen.

"I must 'ave sleep, mighty sound," remarked the corporal. "I'd never believe I'd been asleep an hour, if I didn't see it 'ere the clock."

"No signs of any one yet," reported the man who had been in the kitchen. "Be 'e going to wait till six?"

"Yes," answered the corporal. "But no longer."

Then they began talking about the British fleet that was cruising in Long Island Sound, and about the ship on which they were temporarily quartered until they could join the main body of the army, and how a neighbor of Brinton's father and mother had been down at the store when a ship's boat had put in for water, and how he had told the officer in charge that Major Hall, Brinton's father, was ex-

pected home for a few hours that day, and what a fine opportunity it would be to make an important capture.

The clock struck half past five.

"Hm!" grunted the corporal. "It doesn't seem that late; but, you know, you can't tell anything about anything in this blasted country."

Brinton now began to be very much afraid that his father would come before the soldiers left. He wanted to move the pendulum faster and faster, but after what the corporal had said he did not dare to. Then, when the men lapsed into silence, it suddenly came over Brinton how dreadfully weary he was, how all his bones ached. But he felt that his father's only chance of safety lay in his keeping the pendulum swinging to and fro, to and fro.

At last, however, came the welcome sound of the corporal's voice bidding the men get ready to start.

"Whang-whang-whang-whang-whang!"

"Fall in!" ordered the corporal. Forward, march!"

As the sound of their footsteps died away, Brinton, all of a tremble, opened the door of the clock and stumbled out. He knelt at the window and watched the retreating forms of the redcoats. As they disappeared down the road he heard a noise behind him, and jumped up with a start.

There stood his father!

The next instant Brinton was sobbing in his arms.

Brinton's mother came into the room. "Dear me!" she said; "what ever can be the matter with the clock? It's half an hour fast."

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BRUNORO AND BONA

By MARY MARSHALL.

Let us take ourselves back almost 500 years to a certain beautiful woods in Northern Italy. The sun flickered gently through the thick overhanging chestnut boughs, and everything was still, save the low, musical hum of insects. The scene, the sounds, and even the fresh smell of new growing things were just what meets you boys and girls when, on a nice spring day, you wander out into your own woods.

All at once a strange figure broke in upon the scene, a handsome young knight riding on a white horse with red leather trappings. The knight with a party of pleasure-seekers and, wearying of the pastime, had ridden off by himself into this secluded portion of the woods.

Imagine, now, that you hear a burst of musical girlish laughter through the trees, happy voices, calling back and forth.

"Bona, Bona, Bona!" could be heard distinctly.

Our knight in the woods had come upon no lady of high degree in his wanderings, for in face and costume this little woman was surely a peasant. At sight of him, obviously a person of distinction, the girl started back in surprise and then, covering her confusion, she dropped a low courtesy.

"Good day," said the knight, with the usual salutation of his country. "May I be of assistance to you? Are you lost in this deep woods?"

"Oh, no, sir," said the girl. "I was but hiding in sport from my playfellows. We are having a merry-making in the woods. It is the custom of us village folk to meet together on pleasant holidays in the woods like this."

After a few more words the pretty peasant maiden asked the knight to go back with her to the others and if he were willing, to join them in the supper they were preparing. The knight was delighted to follow his guide, who, even if she wasn't a real lady, was very graceful in her manners.

Thus it was that Brunoro—for that was the knight's name—met Bona, whose story is still told by the peasants of Italy just as if it all happened yesterday.

Brunoro was in the service of a great duke, who for some foolish reason had got into a quarrel with a duke who lived in a castle near Bona's home. The two dukes had carried on their quarrel till finally Brunoro's duke, having no better adventure on hand, had come with his little company of fighters and encamped near his enemy's castle ready to fight.

Then something better turned up—some adventure that seemed to postpone hostilities. So away he went, leaving Brunoro, who was the most daring knight in his service, in charge of his forces till his return. In the meantime, there was to be no fighting, and Brunoro and his friends had leisure to go about in the beautiful country where they were encamped, hunting and feasting and merrymaking and generally enjoying themselves as all true knights were expected to do in those days.

It was in one of these hunting trips that he met Bona. After he had talked with her for a few minutes he saw that she was a very well educated little girl, and had all the grace and charm of manner that he had ever seen in any lady or princess. This he was rather surprised to find in a peasant, so he asked some of the village folk about her.

"This young girl, Bona," he said to a young farmer he had been talking to, "has she always dwelt among you? She talks as well and as gracefully as any high born lady I have ever met."

"Bona!" exclaimed the peasant with great respect. "Have you not heard of Bona? She is the niece of the priest of our village church. Her mother and father died when she was a babe, and she has lived with her uncle ever since. He has taken great pains to teach her, so that now, I dare

say, there is not another girl or boy for many a day's ride about here who knows as much as she does. And there is nothing proud about her, either. For not even the father himself is kinder to us when we are in trouble. 'Tis strange, indeed, that you had never heard of Bona."

Now, it happened that Brunoro, though he was 19 or 20 years old, had never plighted his troth to any lady, and when he heard of all the graces of Bona and saw for himself how good and clever she was, he decided to make her his lady-love. To be sure, a knight in his position was supposed to plight his troth to no one but a lady of high degree, but Brunoro had never seen a lady so pretty or intelligent as Bona.

All summer long Brunoro stayed encamped with his men near the village where Bona lived, and though it would usually have seemed dull for a knight of his spirit to be kept in such inactivity, he was in no hurry to leave. So, towards the close of summer, when Brunoro had to join his duke in another part of Italy, he took a silken bow-knot from Bona in token of his plighted troth. He would always wear it, he told her, and all that he did in battle, whatever adventure he undertook, would be in her honor. Then, before another summer had come around, he said, he would come back to marry her and take her off to be his lady, to live in a beautiful castle, and to wear beautiful clothes.

But when Brunoro went home to his father and told him that he intended to marry the niece of a poor village priest, the father objected. What, said he angrily, Brunoro, his son, marry a common peasant girl! Indeed not, for there was not a lady in the land—nay, not a princess, either—who would not be glad to marry Brunoro!

Of course, this did not end Brunoro's intention to marry Bona, for nothing was more unworthy of true knight-hood than to break an oath made to a lady. So Brunoro went back to Bona as he had promised, and the good priest married them quietly in the village church and gave them his blessing.



the front. Onward she led the weary cavalry, firing them with new strength and fortitude. On and on they rode against the enemy, pushing them back with ever increasing energy.

The victory was theirs. But Brunoro was still captive. While all the weary, victorious soldiers rested, stupefied after their desperate encounter, little Bona rode desperate to the enemies' camp. Exchanging the proper token of truce, she was shown on foot into the camp of the enemies' commander.

"I salute you, most worthy commander," she said. "It was I who led Brunoro's company after you had made him your prisoner. I have come to make myself known to you."

With these words Bona laid aside her heavy helmet, unmasking her pretty, girlish face and letting her soft brown curls hang down on her shoulders. "I am Brunoro's wife," she said. "I have come to beg his freedom." Here she drew from her mailed



At first Brunoro didn't know what to do with his new wife. He couldn't take her home to live in his father's castle, as he had intended, for his father would not let him. Brunoro himself at this time was an officer in the army of the King of Naples and in order to have his beloved little wife near him he disguised her as another officer and the two rode off to war. Soldiers, you know, in these days, wore heavy coats of armor, and great helmets, so that when Bona was mounted on a horse riding at Brunoro's side no one dreamed that she was not a real knight.

Bona was brave as could be in her new life, but Brunoro did all he could to shield and protect her. One day a great battle took place in which Brunoro had command of a company of armed cavalry. You've no idea what a frightful experience it was for Bona. The clanking armor, the wild, frenzied riding in all directions, the mad charges of the enemy, when the knights around her fell wounded and dying from their horses, was enough to make even a man grow faint from fear.

All at once, right in the thick of the fray, Brunoro was taken prisoner. The company was left without a commander. For a few minutes all was wild confusion, and then Bona, strengthened by the loss of Brunoro, dashed at full speed on her horse to

sauntier a little leather bag. "These are all the jewels I possess," she said. "They are precious stones Brunoro gave me as a wedding present. I offer them as a ransom for Brunoro."

The commander, in great surprise, counted the jewels one by one. They were of great value, greater even than Bona had imagined. Then he called a soldier and told him to unchain Brunoro and bring him before him. All this time Brunoro had been in a dreadful state of anxiety—fearing that Bona, without him to protect her, might have been killed, and quite convinced that his own men had been defeated.

What, then, was his surprise, on being led into the commander's camp, to find Bona, and then to be given back his faithful charger and allowed to ride back to his own camp with little Bona at his side.

News of this adventure soon spread throughout the country, and Brunoro could no longer disguise Bona as a knight. But he no longer had need to, for when Brunoro's father heard of his old heart was deeply touched. He welcomed Brunoro and Bona into his castle with great rejoicing and merrymaking. And after that the old knight couldn't do enough for Bona, and so far as any one knows they all lived happily ever after.

